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Front matter, vol. 10, issue 2

Abstract

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The Order of Bourgeois Protest.

Geoffrey Waite 145

Abstract. Relatively little theoretical work is currently being produced by Western "Leftists" on committed protest culture. Simultaneously and not by chance, Western Marxism has drifted increasingly away from solidarity with the concept and practice of the vanguard party and toward a more or less easy compact with the problematic of poststructuralism and postmodernity. This relative paucity of discussion of commitment and protest stands in significant relationship to two critical moments: first, a powerful, *over*theorized tradition of Western Marxist debate about commitment and protest (Benjamin, Sartre, Barthes, Marcuse, Adorno, among others); second, a wide-spread, *under*theorized work-a-day practice of "traditional" liberal (and not so liberal) academic research and pedagogy. Yet *both* Western Marxism *and* supposedly neutral scholarship in fact constitute an unacknowledged consensus: "the order of bourgeois protest." This consensus has monopolized discussion in the West of committed protest and has worked to obviate the issue of commitment to the party. The essay at hand attempts, from the perspective of Marxist-Leninism (Marx, Engels, Lenin, Gramsci, among others) to investigate and settle accounts with the order of bourgeois protest and, hence, to investigate and settle accounts with part of the prehistory of current "Leftist" sterility and impotence in the pressing matter of (cultural) politics. (GW)

Unreading Borges's Labyrinths.

Lawrence R. Schehr 177

Abstract. Borges's stories often valorize the figures of text and labyrinth, and, in "The Garden of Forking Paths," an identity is posited between them. This identity is the means to deconstructing the story and, at the same time, for refusing both structuralist and metaphysical readings of the work. The text of the story gradually subsumes the world it seeks to represent under and within an all-encompassing textuality without origin and without any clearly delimited

meaning except absence, the destruction of meaning, death. The solution of the labyrinth is its dissolution, that is, the deconstruction of the text. This easily thematizable deconstruction is actually a far more radical and subtle deconstruction of the text as structure or "meaning." Intertextuality and fragmentation undo the work and underline what amounts to a series of transgressions. These transgressions, that is, the text itself, are attempts to fill the void of the signified with signifier. And these transgressions, read, understood, and thereby iterated by the reader, are the signs of the deferred desire central to the work, its fundamental and radical *différance*. (LRS)

Paul Celan's Linguistic Mysticism.

Shira Wolosky 191

Abstract. Paul Celan's works often seem to grant to language an autonomy that isolates poetic from extra-poetic concerns, including religious ones. The status of language in Celan, however, should be assessed in the context of its status within Judaic mysticism. While the importance of mysticism for Celan has been recognized, the degree to which Judaic mysticism differs from other mystical traditions has been less so. This is especially true with regard to the place given to language in the Kabbalah, and the structures and assumptions that its conception of language implies. Of importance to Celan, for example, is the Kabbalistic notion that language is the very substance constituting creation. By examining such Judaic mystical motifs in several Celan poems, this essay attempts to show that Celan's preoccupation with language does not entail a withdrawal into a self-enclosed linguistic world, and that ultimately his religious concerns are intimately involved with his aesthetic ones. (SW)

Eco's Echoes: Fictional Theory and Detective Practice in *The Name of the Rose*.

David H. Richter 213

Abstract. Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* is a serio-comic pastiche of the detective story set in the middle ages, which uses history as "a distant mirror" to comment, from a Western Marxist perspective, on contemporary political issues. Structurally, however, *The Name of the Rose* is a fictional enactment of many of the semiotician's recent critical and philosophical ideas. (1) Eco's discussion of "abductive" reasoning in C. S. Peirce and Aristotle appears in a detective not only more fallible than Sherlock Holmes but more aware of what his powers consist of and why they work and fail. (2) Eco's explanation of what he calls the "iterative scheme" in popular fiction—ways of handling time that allow for

indefinite *sequelae*—appears negatively here, where time and time's passage are given their full durational weight. (3) Eco's discussion of closed and open texts, and of a third category "of which the chairman is probably *Tristram Shandy*," which evades both modes of reading and forces one into consciousness of the reading process itself, is enacted in *The Name of the Rose*, in a traditionally closed genre (the mystery) which is first opened but finally given an ending that deconstructs the mystery novel by forcing the reader into the third, Shandean, mode. (DHR)

The Syntax of Assertion in the Poetry of Claudio Rodríguez.

Margaret H. Persin 237

Abstract. Through his original and unsettling manner of syntactical assertion, Claudio Rodríguez, the contemporary Spanish poet, subverts the conventional usage of language. But, in turn, he captures the transcendental, magical experience of language and all existence in the process of the text. That experience is based on intuition, irrationality and sensorial associations, rather than on logical connections. The reader is thus confronted with texts whose contradictory interpretive paths of signification continually subvert one another. Rodríguez wishes to communicate that it is not the end result but rather the process of the text that is the ultimate meaning. The reader's task is to participate in that process and experience firsthand the intricacies of Rodríguez's intuitive approach to reality. The characteristics of an intuitive approach to reality, irrationality, and sensorial associations establish a historical and literary connection between Rodríguez's work and that of the Surrealists. (MHP)

Brecht, Hegel, Lacan: Brecht's Theory of Gest and the Problem of the Subject.

Philip E. Bishop 267

Abstract. Brecht used the term "gest" to describe the generic components of human social behavior. He schooled actors in "decomposing" real conduct into distinct gestic images, which were criticized, compared, and altered by other actor-spectators. In his pedagogic theater, Brecht's young players engaged in a reciprocal process of acting and observing, which prepared them to act critically outside the theater. This gestic reciprocity echoes the master-slave dialectic in Hegel's *Phenomenology* and Lacan's description of the mirror phase. In Hegel, a subject achieves mastery (or self-consciousness) through the recognition of another subject. In Lacan, the infant recognizes itself in an (alienated) mirror-image and in its dramatic interactions with other infants. In each of these inter-

subjective dialectics, the subject achieves sovereignty through the recognition of others and through a dramatic exchange with others. For Brecht, however, the structural roles of actor and spectator, teacher and student, were reversible, thus yielding a utopian notion of shared or collective sovereignty that is absent from Lacan. Furthermore, Brecht hoped that the sovereignty gained in the gestic theater would be transferred to actions outside the theater, on the stage of history. (PEB)

Twenty Questions for Noël Arnaud.

Warren F. Motte, Jr.289

Abstract. Noël Arnaud, the president of the Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle (Oulipo), discusses that institution's history, its literary aesthetic, and its goals. He offers an assessment of twenty-five years of Oulipian activity, in the course of which he touches upon notions which are crucial to the Oulipo's praxis: the fundamental analogy of mathematics and literature, the role of formal constraint in the literary text, and the mutual complementarity of scholarship in literary history and the practice of innovative literary experimentalism. (WFM)